OXFORD PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

Persons

A HISTORY

Edited by Antonia LoLordo

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Series Editor's Foreword

Oxford Philosophical Concepts (OPC) offers an innovative approach to philosophy's past and its relation to other disciplines. As a series, it is unique in exploring the transformations of central philosophical concepts from their ancient sources to their modern use.

OPC has several goals: to make it easier for historians to contextualize key concepts in the history of philosophy, to render that history accessible to a wide audience, and to enliven contemporary discussions by displaying the rich and varied sources of philosophical concepts still in use today. The means to these goals are simple enough: eminent scholars come together to rethink a central concept in philosophy's past. The point of this rethinking is not to offer a broad overview, but to identify problems the concept was originally supposed to solve and investigate how approaches to them shifted over time, sometimes radically. Recent scholarship has made evident the benefits of reexamining the standard narratives about western philosophy. OPC's editors look beyond the canon and explore their concepts over a wide philosophical landscape. Each volume traces a notion from its inception as a solution to specific problems through its historical transformations to its modern use, all the while acknowledging its historical context. Each OPC volume is a *history* of its concept in that it tells a story about changing solutions to its well defined problem. Many editors have found it appropriate to include long-ignored writings drawn from the Islamic

and Jewish traditions and the philosophical contributions of women. Volumes also explore ideas drawn from Buddhist, Chinese, Indian, and other philosophical cultures when doing so adds an especially helpful new perspective. By combining scholarly innovation with focused and astute analysis, OPC encourages a deeper understanding of our philosophical past and present.

One of the most innovative features of OPC is its recognition that philosophy bears a rich relation to art, music, literature, religion, science, and other cultural practices. The series speaks to the need for informed interdisciplinary exchanges. Its editors assume that the most difficult and profound philosophical ideas can be made comprehensible to a large audience and that materials not strictly philosophical often bear a significant relevance to philosophy. To this end, each OPC volume includes Reflections. These are short stand-alone essays written by specialists in art, music, literature, theology, science, or cultural studies that *reflect on* the concept from their own disciplinary perspectives. The goal of these essays is to enliven, enrich, and exemplify the volume's concept and reconsider the boundary between philosophical and extra-philosophical materials. OPC's Reflections display the benefits of using philosophical concepts and distinctions in areas that are not strictly philosophical, and encourage philosophers to move beyond the borders of their discipline as presently conceived.

The volumes of OPC arrive at an auspicious moment. Many philosophers are keen to invigorate the discipline. OPC aims to provoke philosophical imaginations by uncovering the brilliant twists and unforeseen turns of philosophy's past.

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Persons

OXFORD PHILOSOPHICAL CONCEPTS

Introduction

THE CONCEPT OF A PERSON FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Antonia LoLordo

1

The concept of a person plays a crucial role in philosophy, ethics, the law, and everyday life. Metaphysicians discuss what it is to be a person and what is required for a person to persist through time. Ethicists talk about respect for persons and disagree over whether chimpanzees or coma victims are persons. Corporations are persons under the law, and according to recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings, corporate personhood carries with it a panoply of rights shared with natural persons—including, in *Citizens United*, the right to free speech. My friend Sue, objecting to her kids' habit of passing her their trash instead of throwing it away themselves, says to them, "I'm a *person*!"

In this book, I ask: what is the concept of a person—as distinct from the concept of a human being or a self—and how did we come to have

it? When did the concept come into being, and why? What problems was it originally introduced to solve, and do these problems remain live ones for us? If they do not, which *new* problems has the concept been drafted to solve? Has this changed the concept, and if so, what traces of previous uses remain?

Behind these questions is the claim that we can only fully understand the concept of a person by knowing its history. Like other concepts central to the way we think about the world, it has gained its significance not through definition but through the accretion of layers of meaning over centuries. Thus, to understand why we have the concept of a person and whether it can do the work it is meant to do, we must understand when, where, and why it came into existence. What function did it originally serve? Why has it survived for so long? Did the problems that initially motivated its invention persist, or was it used for different purposes in different contexts? Have its fortunes waxed and waned over the centuries, and if so, why?

Many strands go into the weaving of the complex and ancient concept of a person, but five are particularly important. Not all of the philosophers discussed in this book use all five strands, and the five are not foregrounded to the same extent in all periods. But together, they capture the concept's wide range of uses.

The first strand is that persons are particulars—things that, by their very nature, cannot be multiply instantiated. This is the one strand that appears in every account of persons and personhood looked at in this book. That persons are particulars is emphasized in early, theologically motivated discussions in both Christian and Islamic traditions. (See chapters 2 and 3.) In later discussions it fades into the background. However, traces of it remain in the thought that each person is an individual with her or his own unique properties.

The second strand is that persons are roles. Originally, a person was a role in a play; soon thereafter, a person could also be a legal, political, or more broadly social role. This strand is central to the origin of the concept of a person, but it pretty much disappears from talk about

persons by the early modern period. At least, it disappears from talk about *natural* persons by the early modern period. An important trace of it remains in the law surrounding corporate personhood.

Third, persons are entities with special moral significance. The special moral significance of persons has been spelled out in a number of different ways. For some philosophers, to be a person is to fall under the scope of natural law. (See chapters 5 and 6.) For others, to be a person is to be worthy of respect or to have interests that merit moral consideration in their own right. (See chapters 6, 7, and 10.)

Fourth, persons are rational beings. There is some disagreement about what rationality amounts to and about that in virtue of which persons are rational. And among those philosophers who ascribe reason to animals as well as human beings, there is also some disagreement about the degree or kind of rationality required for personhood.

Finally, persons are *selves*—reflective, self-conscious, perhaps even self-constituting. The concept of a self is significantly narrower than the concept of a person, but it is one strand of that concept. And it is emphasized in a number of otherwise quite different accounts of personhood, such as those put forward by Epictetus, Hildegard von Bingen, Locke, and so on. (See chapters 1, 3, and 5.)

To count someone or something as a person is simultaneously to describe it—as a particular, a role, a rational being, and a self—and to prescribe certain norms concerning how it may act and how it may be treated by other persons. Typically, these norms are thought to apply *because* of the being's descriptive features. (In the shorthand of contemporary ethics, moral personhood is grounded in metaphysical personhood.) The concept of a person thus fuses the normative and the descriptive. This is one of the reasons why we need the concept of a person, one of the ways it is different from, and richer than, the concept of a human being. And one major concern of philosophers over the last few hundred years has been to figure out how best to understand the relationship between the normative and descriptive aspects of personhood.

2

This book is divided into three parts, corresponding to the origin of the concept, its development over the last 2,500 years, and its current role. Part I concerns the two starting points of the concept in the ancient world. Part II deals with how it evolved in the medieval, early modern, and modern periods. Part III looks at how the concept has been used and transformed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The story begins in ancient Rome. René Brouwer explains the history of the concept of a person as a history of transfers. He makes this point about its early history, but as will become apparent, it applies far more broadly. Transfers mark the concept all the way up to the present.

Brouwer draws our attention to some early sources of the Latin term *persona* and the associated concept. One source is a set of Etruscan tomb paintings depicting *phersu*, a masked figure who takes part in funerary games. The Romans borrowed two elements from the Etruscan practice, the term *persona* and the prominent use of masks in burial rites. Masks also played a crucial role in Greek theatre, where the main actors (though not the chorus) wore human masks. The term "mask" thus took on the broader meaning of "character" or "role." Here two strands of the later concept are already in use. Wearing a mask that represents a dead person is a way of invoking and emphasizing that person's particularity. And to put on a mask and step onto the stage is to occupy a certain role.

The term *persona* soon made its way into philosophy. Epictetus (writing in Greek) spoke of the different *prosōpa* (roles) people play. Cicero (writing in Latin) distinguished two *personae* that all people have. One is particular to us. The other arises from the fact of our rationality, and is connected with notions of honor and appropriateness. In Stoic philosophers, like Panaetius and, later, Epictetus, two more strands of the concept come into the picture: person as locus of moral significance and person as rational being. For the Stoics, as for many later philosophers, these two notions are related because it is in virtue

of their rationality that persons are morally significant. In fact, the assumption that the moral significance of persons depends on their rationality does not seem to have been seriously challenged until the twentieth century. The implications of this challenge become apparent in chapter 10.

In Epictetus we also see the final strand of the concept of a person: person as self. For Epictetus, Brouwer argues, thinks of the various roles people play from the inside: they are not merely collections of social obligations but ways of constituting the self. This strand is relatively underdeveloped in antiquity, but it comes to the forefront in the late medieval period, much earlier than I initially expected. (See chapter 4.)

The Romans distinguished the concept of a person from the concept of the individual human being. An individual human being can play many *personae*, and Roman law allowed corporate bodies to be persons. The concept of a person also has an ethical dimension that the concept of a human being lacks. In his Reflection, Gregory Hays explores both the Roman and our own anxiety about the gap between personhood and humanity. He uses the myth of the Minotaur, as retold in a painting by the contemporary figurative painter Erika Meriaux. Meriaux depicts the Minotaur as a child, playing with a ball outside his Labyrinth, accompanied by his mother in a pink Chanel suit and her cigar-smoking husband. The Minotaur is a monster, a being with the body of a human being and the head of a bull, but in Meriaux's painting he is also an ordinary toddler, playing with his ball, shirt untucked over his fat belly. The Minotaur is fully a person, although he is only half a human being. In keeping with this, the mood of the painting is ominous. For in the back of the viewer's mind is the knowledge that the Minotaur can survive only by eating human flesh—a vivid representation of the destabilizing effects of the gap between person and human.

In chapter 2, Scott Williams picks up the story where Brouwer leaves off, as the western Christian tradition was emerging from the ruins of the Roman empire. In this tradition, two questions were pressing. One

concerned the Trinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were supposed to be three and at the same time one. How could this be? Early Christian philosophers and theologians, borrowing a Roman notion, came to the consensus that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three persons, although one God. A second question concerned the Incarnation. Christ was supposed to be one being, simultaneously both human and divine. How could this be? Again, the notion of a person was invoked: Christ had two natures but was one person.

This consensus, however, hid a great deal of disagreement, and although Boethius's definition of a person as an individual substance of a rational nature was widely known and widely discussed, it was far from being widely *accepted*. Williams sets out the nature and extent of disagreement, and in the course of explaining what was at stake for different writers, he makes clear how the concept of a person shifted from a primarily social concept (person as role) to a primarily ontological one.

When I started thinking about the history of the concept of a person, I wondered why early Christian writers decided to appropriate the Roman notion of a person for theological purposes. There was some overlap between the Stoic notion of a *persona* and the notion used to make sense of the Trinity and the Incarnation, but not all that much. What then made early Christians interested in the Roman concept of a person? Why did they decide to transform that existing concept instead of simply devising an entirely new one?

Williams argues that this is in fact an accident of history. Translators used the Latin *persona* for several different Greek terms: not only *prosōpon* (mask, role, character) but also *ousia* ("being"—also translated as *substantia* or *essentia*) and *hypostasis* (which some theologians distinguished from *ousia* and others equated with it). And while *ousia* and *hypostasis* may suggest particularity, they lack the moral and social dimensions of *prosōpon*. In fact, Williams argues, the rationality condition for personhood turns out be far from central for early Christians.

The notions of substance, individuality, and incommunicability did almost all the work.

Thus, just as a major shift in meaning occurred when the Etruscan *phersu* became the Roman *persona*, a major shift in meaning took place when the Roman *persona* was used to make sense of the Trinity and the Incarnation. This shift was so drastic that some writers found it appealing to simply deny that they were using the Roman concept: Richard of St. Victor, for instance, insisted that the Holy Spirit gave the Latin west the notion of a person.

By this point, readers might be wondering about the individuation of concepts. Why do I think that Richard of St. Victor is using the same concept as Panaetius, even though Richard himself explicitly denies this? More generally, why think that the early Christians radically transformed an existing concept? Why not think they invented a new one?

One obvious answer is linguistic. Richard of St. Victor and other early Christians used the same term, *persona*, that Romans like Panaetius did. Of course, this is no guarantee that they were using the same concept, since the two terms might be homonyms. However, the transfer was gradual. We did not get from *phersu* to Boethius in a leap, but through a slow process of semantic drift.

Moreover, later writing about persons draws on both the Roman concept and the Trinitarian one. Consider, for example, Locke's discussion of persons, which drew on the discussions of Hobbes and Grotius, discussions that in turn harked back to the Roman concept. But the Trinitarian notion of a person also played a role for Locke, and when Edward Stillingfleet objected that the Lockean notion of a person was incompatible with the doctrine of the Trinity, Locke took the worry seriously. The semantic drift moved not in a straight line but more like an eddy. All five strands of the concept of a person that I have identified can be found in the Stoics, in the twenty-first century, and at various points in between.

Not only is the use of cognate terms insufficient to establish that two philosophers are using the same concept, it isn't even necessary. The term *persona* has no Arabic cognate, but philosophers in the Islamic world wrote about persons and personhood nevertheless. (See chapter 3.) In this case, there is still a historical connection, though not a linguistic one: medieval Islamicate philosophers traced their concepts back to the Greeks in precisely the same way medieval Christian philosophers did. But the presence of a historical connection isn't absolutely necessary. We see in chapter 9 that philosophers writing in Sanskrit used the concept of a person long before there was any clear historical or linguistic connection.

In chapter 3, Anthony F. Shaker discusses the role played by the concept of a person in medieval and early modern Islamicate philosophy. His term *shakhṣ* can simply mean "particular," much like the Greek *hypostasis*. And for the philosophers Shaker discusses, as for those Williams discusses, it is the notion of a person as a particular that is most important.

The figures Shaker discusses disagree on much, but there is underlying agreement on a metaphysics in which the world emanates from God (in contrast with the creation ex nihilo picture typical in the Latin west). Many of the philosophers discussed in this book address the question of why there is something rather than nothing. But the question of being is central in emanationist metaphysics, where explaining the emergence of the many from the one is foregrounded. Shaker argues that the process by which the many flow from the one is a process of personification, and that the central role of the notion of a person in the Islamicate tradition is thus one of particularity.

In chapter 4, Christina Van Dyke examines an under-studied movement in the western Christian tradition of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. During this period, the notion of person as particular (which dominated chapters 1 and 2), remained relevant to writers like Hadewijch, who tried to explain how humans survived the mystical union with God that they should aspire to. Moral personhood and

the related notion of persons as rational beings were important here too. Both were articulated in terms of dignity, a property each human person has in virtue of having been created in the image of God and thus as a rational being. The idea of persons as selves, foreshadowed in Epictetus, plays a far more significant role here. Indeed, Van Dyke argues, the contemplatives she discusses have a powerful concept of personhood that anticipates important aspects of both the Lockean conception of personhood (discussed in chapter 5) and the personalists' conception (discussed in chapter 8).

In this chapter, Van Dyke draws on both standard scholastic sources and on the vernacular contemplative tradition through the work of writers like Hildegard von Bingen, who have been traditionally (mistakenly, she argues) counted as mystics rather than philosophers. This brings to the foreground an important issue: what happens when one makes the case for one's own personhood or that of another being? Have women, for instance, changed the concept of a person in the course of positioning themselves as full persons? If Van Dyke is correct, the mainly female contemplative writers she discusses enriched the concept in a way that has not yet been fully recognized.

In chapter 5, I turn to early modern Britain, where what is now one of the chief philosophical questions concerning personhood was first articulated: the question of personal identity. I begin with Hobbes, who asks about persistence conditions in general. Because he rejects hylemorphism and thus cannot simply assume that things persist as long as their forms persist, he needs to provide some alternate account of the conditions under which the things around us persist. However, he does not ask about the persistence conditions for persons in particular. His interest in personhood derives from his political theory, in which what matters is that the multitude of human beings in the state can constitute one person (just as the Catholic Church had for centuries been counted as a *persona ficta*). Locke builds on this to pose the problem of personal identity as we know it. For him, the problem stems from our limited knowledge. On Locke's view, we do not know

whether we are wholly material, or whether we are the conjunction of a material body and an immaterial soul. But we *do* know for certain that we persist through time, that we are responsible for our past actions, that we have a special concern for the happiness and misery of one particular being, and that we will be resurrected after we die. Thus, Locke needs a theory that can allow for us to have the latter sort of knowledge in the absence of the former. His account of personal identity, on which persons persist just in case consciousnesses persist, does precisely that.

The relationship between the metaphysics of persons and the moral significance of persons was a major issue in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Neo-Lockeans, like Catherine Trotter Cockburn and Edmund Law, made the metaphysics of persons subservient to the demands of morality. Leibniz accepted the Lockean distinction between moral agents and thinking substances while rejecting Locke's metaphysical agnosticism. And Hume—who famously distinguishes between personal identity as it regards our thought and personal identity as it regards our passions—tries to sever the moral and metaphysical dimensions entirely, arguing that persons as traditionally understood do not persist but disclaiming any ethical implications.

In her Reflection, Jennifer Tsien expands on the moral dimension of eighteenth-century personhood, looking at how Voltaire's numerous depictions of cannibalism serve as a metaphor for the way some people—men, Europeans, the powerful—deny the personhood of others. An old woman recounts how one of her buttocks was eaten by Turkish janissaries on the brink of starvation. A slave in Surinam, who has been punished for an attempt to escape by having an arm and leg amputated, explains, "This is what it costs, supplying you Europeans with sugar." Such figures, Tsien argues, exist in a gray area between individual and type. The way they recount their experiences demonstrates their particularity and selfhood. At the same time, they are never named, in keeping with the way their personhood has been discounted.

In chapters 6 and 7, Udo Thiel and Owen Ware pick up the story in Germany. Thiel discusses the views of Leibniz, Wolff, and Kant as three variations on an anti-Lockean theme. All three reject Locke's claim that the persistence of a consciousness is all that matters for the persistence of a person. At the same time, they agree with Locke that consciousness and its concomitant, rationality, must be foregrounded. And, like Locke, they recognize that a certain degree of consciousness and rationality is found in animals as well as humans. Wolff, for instance, thinks that animal souls, like human souls, are simple, immaterial, naturally indestructible substances. He also ascribes consciousness and memory to animals. What then is the difference between humans and animals? Wolff answers that it is simply that only human beings are conscious of their own diachronic identity. At this point, the cognitive conditions for personhood are becoming increasingly sophisticated. The more cognitive sophistication is required for personhood, the more beings who intuitively count as persons will be excluded from genuine personhood. But Wolff and his contemporaries do not seem to see the exclusion of young children and others from personhood as a problem for their accounts. It's only in the last chapter of this book, in the context of contemporary ethics, that the exclusion of infants and others from personhood is seen as a problem.

By the eighteenth century, the notion of person as particular has faded into the background, and the notion of person as role has fallen out of the picture. What is left is the notion of a person as a rational being, a self, and a locus of moral significance. The notion of a person as locus of moral significance becomes central to Kant's ethics, in the form of respect for persons. The Kantian notion of a person has had a great deal of influence on twenty-first-century ethics. Indeed, as Jaworska and Tannenbaum claim in chapter 10, the notion of a person that is used in twenty-first-century ethical theory is basically Kant's notion, with the metaphysics excised. However, as Ware points out, the notion of a person is largely *absent* from the work of heirs of Kant

like Fichte, who dispense with the noumenal self altogether. Ware's story is thus a story of the rise and fall of the concept of a person.

In a challenging chapter, Aaron Preston considers two very different traditions within twentieth- and twenty-first-century philosophy: first, the analytic tradition, in which the concept of a person was sidelined, and second, the now relatively unknown personalist tradition, in which that concept took center stage. Personalism emerged out of German Idealism, as a reaction against the monism of philosophers like Fichte. Using elements from the Kantian tradition and from Christian theology, personalists developed a complex characterization of personhood: to be a person is to have a wide range of cognitive and affective capacities, in addition to moral agency, selfhood, and libertarian free will.

Preston points out that the personalist school was deeply engaged with the world beyond the academy. Martin Luther King, for instance, said that personalism gave him a metaphysical grounding for belief in the dignity and worth of all human beings. Preston contrasts this with the relative lack of engagement with the broader culture that he sees as characteristic of twentieth- and twenty-first-century analytic philosophy. He suggests that one reason for this lack of engagement is the minimal role of persons and personhood in that tradition. Of course, Preston recognizes that there is a lot of analytic metaphysics of persons, especially metaphysics of diachronic personal identity. Nevertheless, he holds that analytic philosophy ultimately fails to take persons seriously. For, he argues, the dominant analytic views of personhood—Parfit's reductionism, the no-subject view, the bundle theory, and so on—do not serve the needs of morality.

In chapter 9, Mark Siderits discusses a group of Buddhist philosophers who articulate a reductionist account of persons and develop a sophisticated account of how such reductionism is compatible with the moral significance of persons. I said earlier that concepts are defined by their histories. But sometimes multiple streams of history

can yield the same concept, as happens here. I doubt that anyone who reads this chapter could seriously maintain that the concept *pugdala* is not the concept "person." In fact, it's not just the concepts that occur in both Buddhist and analytic traditions. At least in one case, a theory recurs too: the Buddhist account of personhood that Siderits discusses has many affinities with the Parfitian account of persons found in the analytic tradition.

Siderits explains that there is a clear distinction between self and person in the Buddhist tradition, and that Buddhists typically deny the existence of the *self* without denying the existence of *persons*. Persons, they argue, are not ultimately real, but they are nevertheless real: they are conventionally real. Here's what their conventional reality amounts to. There are various consciousnesses in temporally extended, causally related sequences. Some later consciousnesses appropriate or identify with earlier ones. Because of this, we can count such sequences as persons. Indeed, according to the philosophers Siderits discusses, we *should* count them as persons because by doing so, we make it more likely that these sequences will behave in a morally appropriate manner and that others will behave in a morally appropriate manner toward them. Thus, the Buddhist philosophers Siderits discusses can be read as providing an answer to Preston's worry, that morality cannot do without substantial persons.

In another Reflection, Sylvia Shin Huey Chong looks at the question of personhood through a series of works all called *Ghost in the Shell*: a 1991 Japanese manga, a 1995 Japanese anime, and a 2017 American live-action film. In the dystopian world of *Ghost in the Shell*, personhood is systematically detached from humanity and ultimately from embodiment altogether. Is this something to be feared—or something to be celebrated? Chong argues that the three different versions of *Ghost in the Shell* give three very different answers to this question. The relationship between the human and the person remains unsettled, and the American film cannot quite embrace the arguments of its Japanese precursors.

In the final chapter, Agnieszka Jaworska and Julie Tannenbaum distinguish between metaphysical and moral personhood, and between three different conceptions of moral personhood: having full moral status, that is, deserving full moral consideration for one's own sake; being owed respect in virtue of one's capacity for autonomy; and being someone to whom moral demands apply. We have seen the second and third conceptions of moral personhood before. Kant argued that to be a person is to be the sort of being who is owed respect in virtue of its capacity for autonomy. Locke held that to be a person is to be the sort of being to whom the demands of morality apply.

In contrast, conceiving of moral personhood as full moral status is relatively new. And, Jaworska and Tannenbaum argue, we need a revised notion of metaphysical personhood to ground it. They take as their starting point what they see as the common sense view that all human beings, regardless of age and cognitive impairment, are persons (while animals like dogs and chickens are *not* persons). If we accept this starting point, then we must conceive of moral personhood in terms of full moral status rather than moral agency or autonomy. Infants are persons, on this commonsense view, although they lack autonomy and moral demands do not apply to them.

Which descriptive features of persons can ground a conception of persons as those beings with full moral status? Neither rationality nor selfhood would be appropriate here. Jaworska and Tannenbaum thus articulate a new account of metaphysical personhood on which personhood is a matter of possessing certain relational capacities. In a certain sense this harks back to the idea of person as social role presented in chapter 1, although the details are very different.

3

In this final chapter, Jaworska and Tannenbaum bring out a set of issues that are important for understanding the concept of personhood throughout its history.

Who counts as a person? Scott Williams surveys accounts of personhood designed to guarantee that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct persons. Hobbes articulates a view designed to make the state a person. Locke articulates a view of persons that, on some readings, is meant to make only Europeans persons. Jaworska and Tannenbaum develop an account of personhood designed to guarantee that infants and cognitively disabled human beings are persons. It is unsurprising that these three different motivations yield rather different accounts of personhood.

Where should we philosophers start our theorizing? Should we begin by assuming that we already know which beings are persons and which are not, and proceed to develop criteria on which only the right ones count as persons? Or should we develop the criteria first, and use them to decide which beings count as persons? If the latter, how should we decide on the criteria in the first place? By appeal to the special moral significance of persons? Or by some other means? All the philosophers discussed in this book, it seems to me, take more or less the former approach. This makes disagreement over who counts as a person particularly significant; it does not seem to be resolvable by appeal to criteria for personhood, since those criteria were found by starting from the disputed cases.

Finally, is there one unified concept of a person that can do all the necessary work? Or are several distinct but overlapping concepts required? Jaworska and Tannenbaum explicate a conception of moral personhood as the possession of full moral status. But they do not take this to constitute an argument against neo-Lockean or neo-Kantian accounts of moral personhood. Rather, they suggest, all three conceptions of moral personhood are useful for different purposes. Might one say the same about many of the conceptions of personhood surveyed in this book?